

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

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FM AMCONSUL LAHORE

TO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 0137

AMCONSUL KARACHI

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LAHORE 1180

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, PK

SUBJECT: PUNJAB IRRIGATION MINISTER CONFIRMS SERIOUSNESS OF
LOSS OF TARBELA WATER FOR AGRICULTURE

REF: LAHORE 1154 AND 1176

1. MY NEXT INTRODUCTORY CALL FOLLOWING YESTERDAY'S ON
MINISTER AGRICULTURE (REPORTED LAHORE 1176) WAS FORTUITOUSLY
ON PUNJAB MINISTER FOR IRRIGATION, POWER AND TRANSPORT, MIAN
MOHAMMAD AFZAL WATTOO, TODAY, AND I TOOK OPPORTUNITY
QUESTION HIM ALSO ALONG LINES OF REFTELS CONCERNING
EFFECTS OF LOSS OF TARBELA WATER ON IRRIGATION AND AGRICULTURE
IN PUNJAB. WATTOO'S RESPONSES WERE SO CONSISTENT WITH THOSE
OF MINISTER AGRICULTURE THAT I AM REPORTING ONLY WHERE THEY
DIVERGED OR ADD SIGNIFICANTLY TO STORY.

2. MAIN DIFFERENCE CONCERNED EFFECT OF TARBELA PROBLEM ON
CURRENT KHARIF CROP. UNLIKE MINISTER AND SECRETARY AGRICULTURE
(LAHORE 1176), WATTOO ACKNOWLEDGED THERE WAS A CONNECTION,
THOUGH ONLY PROSPECTIVE AND NOT YET FIRMED UP IN DECISION.
HE SAID MEETING HAD BEEN SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER TO ALLOCATE
TARBELA DAM WATER FOR FUTURE IRRIGATION. HE HAD INTENDED
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SEEK ALLOCATION FOR SOME TARBELA WATER FOR STANDING RICBAND

OTHER KHARIF CROPS IN DISTRICTS COMMANDED BY INDUS IRRIGATION WORKS (SMALL BARRAGE AT KALABAGH, LARGER ONES AT CHASHMA AND TAUNSA) COVERING PARTS OF SARGODHA, MULTAN AND BAHAWALPUR DIVISIONS. SOME SUCH APPLICATIONS WOULD HAVE BEEN HIGHLY BENEFICIAL FOR KHARIF CROPS IN LAST STAGES MATURATION.

3. THIS WOULD NOW HAVE TO BE FOREGONE, UNLESS PRECIOUS WATER IN MANGLA RESERVOIR -- ALREADY BELOW NORMAL LEVEL -- WERE TO BE RELEASED TO AREAS COMMANDED FROM IT. HE REVEALED IN THIS CONNECTION THAT LIMITED AMOUNT OF MANGLA WATER -- AROUND 10,000 CUSECS PER DAY -- WAS BEING RELEASED FOR IRRIGATION UP TO DISCOVERY OF TARBELA PROBLEM, BUT HAD NOW BEEN SUSPENDED.

4. REGARDING SITUATION AT MANGLA, MINISTER OBSERVED RESERVOIR REMAINS FAR FROM FULL DUE TO SHORTFALL IN MONSOON RAINS IN CATCHMENT AREA, AND ITS WATER WOULD HAVE TO BE CAREFULLY MANAGED TO STRIKE DELICATE BALANCE BETWEEN REQUIREMENTS FOR RABI IRRIGATION AND WINTER POWER GENERATION. BOTH WOULD PROBABLY NOW HAVE TO BE CUT BARR. ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT KNOW LATEST POSITION, HIS LAST INFO WAS THAT WATER LEVEL AT MANGLA STILL 30-40 FEET BELOW TOP WHEN IT SHOWS TO BE FULL, WITH LITTLE PROSPECT RISING MUCH HIGHER.

5. AS FOR MONSOON RAINFALL, MINISTER BELIEVED RAINS THIS YEAR HAD NOT EXCEEDED HALF OF NORMAL EXPECTATION, AND MIGHT BE LESS. HE CONSIDERED THIS STRANGE WHEN BANGLADESH AND NORTHERN INDIA HAD EXPERIENCED SUCH HEAVY FLOODS.

6. MINISTER'S COMMENTS RE OUTLOOK FOR NEXT RABI CROP PARALLELED THOSE OF MINISTER AGRICULTURE AND WERE EQUALLY GRIM. HE ADDED THAT GOPUNJAB HAD BEEN COUNTING ON ONE-THIRD INCREASE IN AGRIC PRODUCTION FROM NEXT RABI CROP WITH USE OF ADDITIONAL WATER FROM TARBELA. HE REGRETTED THAT PAKISTAN, WHICH HAD HOPED TO BE IN POSITION TO EXPORT SIZEABLE FOODGRAIN SURPLUS AFTER NEXT RABI CROP TO "HELP ALLEVIATE FOOD SHORTAGES IN OTHER COUNTRIES," WOULD NOW PROBABLY HAVE TO CALL ON "ITS FRIENDS, ESPECIALLY USA" FOR SOME FOOD ASSISTANCE AT LEAST ONE MORE YEAR -- NOT TO MENTION SUPPLEMENTAL HELP FROM WORLD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BANK COLLABORATORS FOR REPAIRING TARBELA DAMAGE.

7. INCIDENTALLY, NEITHER MIN AGRICULTURE NOR MIN IRRIGATION CRITICIZED WORLD BANK, US OR OTHER SPECIFIC PARTICIPANTS FOR NEGLIGENCE IN DESIGNING AND CONSTRUCTING TARBELA TUNNELS. BOTH TOOK FATALISTIC ATTITUDE TOWARD DEVELOPMENT (WATTOO CALLED IT "DEBACLE"), EXPRESSED DEEP REGRET OVER IT, BUT SEEMED INCLINED WITHHOLD BLAME UNTIL TRUE FACTS DETERMINED.

8. COMMENT: MINISTER WATTOO'S REMARKS COME SOMEWHAT CLOSER
TO CONFIRMING PRAZAK'S ASSESSMENT OF SITUATION THAN MINISTER
SAHIBDAD'S (REFTELS).
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